

**The role of English-based Colombian Creole in a formal classroom scenario in a  
public English-Spanish bilingual school in San Andrés Island**

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## RESUMEN

El presente estudio se desarrollo en la isla de San Andrés en la institución pública Bilingüe (Español-Inglés) *Linval School* con el fin de conocer como varía el uso del Creole entre los alumnos con base en los grados primero y quinto de primaria, sexto de media y noveno de media vocacional y, según las edades de los mismos en esta comunidad multilingüe (Español, Inglés, Creole). Además este estudio describe si estas lenguas en contacto (Creole Español Inglés) están en conflicto o si por el contrario se evidencia una lealtad hacia la lengua nativa (Creole) de los raizales. El estudio se guía con base en entrevistas hechas a personas expertas en el tema, desde las autoridades académicas por un lado hasta las profesoras y alumnos de la institución mencionada por el otro. Con esto, pretendemos obtener diferentes miradas desde diferentes ángulos por medio de entrevistas y cuestionarios. Los resultados nos demuestran que la lengua nativa de base inglesa Creole se usa regularmente en el salón de clase para cumplir diferentes propósitos tanto por los docentes como por los alumnos; y que el uso dentro del salón de clase no varía sustancialmente con la edad de los alumnos. También obtuvimos datos relacionados con la actitud de las autoridades académicas frente al uso del Creole en la escuela y la manera como se comportan los niños frente al creole con base en observaciones de clases.

## **ABSTRACT**

The study here presented planned in Pereira but was done in the Island of San Andrés, Colombia, in a public bilingual institution that we call *Linval Bilingual* (Spanish-English) *School*. The purpose of our research is to identify the role that Creole (an English-based Creole) has among the students whose ages vary from first and fifth grades in elementary school, to sixth and ninth grades in junior and junior high school. In addition to the above said, we wanted to know if these languages in contact are in conflict or, on the contrary, the language loyalty to their creole is observed on the side of the of the islanders. The study was made based on interviews to experts and the teachers and school authorities since we wanted to see the different points of view of people who are directly concerned in educational issues. The results showed that both students and teachers use the language inside and outside the classroom for different purposes and that this use does not substantially vary throughout different ages. We also obtained data related to the attitude of some authoritative people towards the use of creole in the school and we also observed classes given to children whose ages were described above.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

With this study we want to show the readers the importance the Creole speakers give to their own language, and how the Creole language is used as a means of communication among the teachers, students and administrative staff in a public English-Spanish bilingual school in the island of San Andrés. We also want to report that the Creole language is not totally absent in the classroom scenario, since the interaction in the language is evident even in Spanish and English classes.

In the first section, statement of the problem, we provide a brief overview of the history of San Andrés, and how the Spanish language was introduced in the Island to the Educational system of the Island.

The second section, the research questions, is focused on the attitudes of teachers towards the use of Creole in the classroom according to ages and grades of the learners being observed.

Then the literature review exposes the theoretical foundations that are relevant and related to the current study, from authors' ideas about the attitudes of Raizales towards Spanish, English and Creole, participants' attitudes towards multilingualism, minority, and majority languages preferences, and also this lit review presents some basic concepts to comprehend some key words of the study. Then the next section, the methodology exposes the tools to gather the data which was conducted throughout the observations, interviews, participants, questionnaires, field notes, video tape records, audio tape records, and checklist, to confirm the students and teacher's perceptions toward the use of Creole language.

Following section, the findings, which are the results of the data collection, showing that in some moments of the class the use of Creole is evident by teacher and students; it also presents how the use of Creole is determined by some external cultural, ethnic and social factors. Later on throughout this paper, the discussion section deals with the findings of this study contrasted or supported by theory.

As a final point, the general conclusions confirm that on one hand the vernacular language of the Raizal community of San Andrés considers Creole as a bridge to learn other language in this case English. On the other hand the conclusions reveal that the Creole language makes part of the cultural aspects in the island, even among continental people who are so involved in the language that have certain degree of comprehension of the English-based Creole.

This is a qualitative study that used observations, interviews and questionnaires to collect data in order to define the role of the Creole language in a public bilingual school in the island of San Andrés where two majority languages are in contact: Spanish and English and Creole as the vernacular language. We also interviewed people who have a word on linguistic issues and who belong to the academia of the island, questioned learners who are the young users whose minds have the responsibility to preserve the language and observed the interaction happening in the classroom.



## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

According to the National Colombian Constitution, Colombia maintains Spanish as the official language but the dialects of ethnic groups are also considered official within their territories. The Constitution also remarks that the teaching within those communities will be bilingual. (Art. 10 National Colombian Constitution) Besides, Colombia is a country with a large diversity of ethnic and cultural diversity, and the General Law of Education recognizes that diversity and claims for their study and critical comprehension as a fundamental for the national unity. (Ley General Artículo 6) and to better understand the problematic situation we will describe, it is important to know some historical facts whose comprehension would eventually clarify the problem.

Along with Spanish, which is the official language in Colombia, De Mejia (2005) reports the existence of 66 Amerindian languages, one English-based Creole language –spoken in the Islands of San Andrés and Old Providence, and one Spanish-based Creole language spoken in San Basilio de Palenque a town located in the Department of Bolivar. Judging from the large number of languages, the linguistic richness in Colombia should be a resource to privilege. Most Spanish-speaking Colombians do not appreciate the linguistic endowment they have since they are unaware of the existence of such a large quantity of indigenous languages. This might be due to the fact that most of those languages other than Spanish spoken in the country are minority languages and to some extent, have been invisible to a large portion of the population. Yet, minority languages are fundamental to conserve and to enrich cultural aspects of a country or of a region, to keep traditions and to preserve identity and history as nation.

De Mejia (2005) considers that English-Based Creole (or Creole spoken in San Andrés), and Spanish-Based Creole (the Palenquero spoken in San Basilio, Bolivar) are perceived by many Colombians as badly spoken English or Spanish respectively; however, these languages were recognized as co-official according to the Colombian Political Constitution of 1991. Based on the statement above, those creole languages have the same recognition as native, ethnical or vernacular Colombian languages.

Now, speaking of the English-based Creole language spoken in San Andrés and Old Providencia, and with the purpose to understand the problem we are introducing, it is important to take into account some historical issues related to San Andrés Island.

To better understand the linguistic historical phenomenon immersed in the insular territories of San Andrés, Old Providence and Santa Catalina, it is important to consider some historical and cultural features of these territories.

According to history, the first inhabitants of San Andrés were Miskito Indigenous, who journeyed to the islands from the coast of Nicaragua. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Spain and England struggled to get the control of the islands and, because of that, the islands changed hands between the two powers several times, until 1793, when England formally recognized that the islands belonged to Spain. The Africans slaves contributed to the colonization of the islands when they officially abolished slavery, the Dutch, the Miskitos, and the English puritans abandoned the islands. The slaves who were African slaves were given lands where they started to work on plantations of cotton, tobacco, and coconut for exportation, and influenced the islander's language, giving some words such as

*Piknini* (children) and *Wende* (where you were). Another event during this period of time was when the Protestants and the Catholic Church arrived in the island with the purpose to evangelize the islanders through either English for the Protestants and Spanish for the Catholic. As a consequence of this history, Indigenous, African, Spanish, and English languages have had a long presence in the islands.

From the times in which Colombia claimed the sovereignty over the islands in 1819 and gained its independence in 1822, Spanish has been the most commonly spoken language in the islands, followed by English. Most of the native islanders spoke a mixture of the two between 1820 and 1822, a sort of *Caribbeanized Pidgin* incomprehensible to outsiders. In the islands, this language is known as Creole. After these events mentioned above, the islanders accepted formally the imposition of some Catholic rites by the Colombians, but continued with their Protestant beliefs and practices. However, Creole was the cultural instrument to resist the imposition of the Spanish language.

In the island of San Andrés the religious rites are basically Protestant. The Protestant religion that the islanders practiced now was first of British origin; but when the Protestant Church was officially founded, it was a Scottish descendent ordained in the United States who adapted the Protestant rite to the US style. Philip Beckman Livingston founded: The First Baptist Church. He was also the same one to free its slaves, shared part of his land with them, and taught them to read and write. Natalia Guevara (2007) The First Baptist Church of San Andrés was founded in 1845. When the Catholic Church first came to these Islands it was a Governmental strategy to assimilate their culture and language. Although at the very beginning, it was English that was used to introduce the Catholic religion; once the Catholics were in power, they began to be extraordinarily demanding this mean that the

Catholic religions seems to be attractive for most of the islanders. For an Islander to get a job he had to become a Catholic. That was when the islanders skillfully introduced the term *job Catholics* to mean that they belonged to the Catholic Church even though they claimed Catholic only to get jobs.

The protestant church tried to contribute to the maintenance of the Creole language through the development of a Christian university which had as goals Creole language development and training for multilingual education, which would be Creole, English and Spanish. When the government forced the schools to shift to Spanish-as-a-medium of instruction, the churches became the only place where English was promoted. For some people, it seems that the Baptist Church has become to represent the last bastion of English maintenance. Therefore, it appears appropriate that the church is active in the whole language development issue on the island (Decker and Keener, 2001).

The linguistic and social realities of the island of San Andrés are very complex based on the studies available in the literature. Speakers in the island live a diglossic situation in which three languages, Spanish, Creole and Standard English live together for different purposes. The imposition of the Spanish language in a context where diglossia exists creates new cultural conflicts. For example, the islanders struggle to find a linguistic identity between the two languages. Some may deny their Creole background, and only communicate in Standard English. Others privilege Spanish over Creole, to the extent of losing the Creole language, even when this language is the home language. Although the Creole language is still spoken by many islanders, it is exclusively used among families and friends, but in the education system there has not been an accomplishment to include intercultural bilingual/trilingual education. In elementary schools and high schools instruction is

delivered in Spanish even though there are laws to defend and protect the cultural endowment (Creole language which is the identity of the Raizales) of the islands.

The educational system that serves the sons and daughters of immigrant families, who constitute 75% of the inhabitants of the archipelago, is conventional but not bilingual or ethno educative, according to what Enciso discussed (2004). This means that most children in the island are learning neither English nor Creole, and also they do not receive enough lessons about the Raizal (name given to the original community on the islands of San Andrés) culture, but they live in an area where the traditional languages are Creole and English, and whose native inhabitants are native islanders.

The first step to introduce Spanish Language in the formal educational system was in 1926. That attempt was not successful since most of the islanders spoke many languages different from Spanish. Those who received formal education spoke Standard English, and those who did not have formal school education spoke Creole. With the declaration of San Andrés as a *free port* between 1953 and 1991, mainland Colombians began to migrate to the islands and started to contribute to the commercial expansion in the islands, specially and mainly in San Andrés. This event also added the imposition of Spanish in the educative system. As a consequence of the massive migration of Colombians, Standard English became weaker and Creole became indirectly stronger. English began to be used in formal situations such as in church rites, and Creole kept on being used in informal situations such as for family and friend relationships. However Creole was a reaction to the imposition of Spanish in a demonstration of language loyalty. Currently, three languages coexist in San Andrés each one of them with different function and status. Older people speak English with English speaking people and in informal situations they speak Creole. Young people

commonly use Creole in informal situations and Spanish for commercial, public, and educative purposes.

Enciso (2004) points out that the use of Spanish is rather ambiguous since it is the language indispensable to get through social status. Nevertheless, the way in which it was imposed to the islanders generated a reaction of rejection from the Raizal community. Standard English is the language of prestige for Islanders, because English is considered their heritage language. They have allowed the inclusion of Standard English in the ethno educative program on one hand and on the other hand excluded the promotion of Creole in schools. Spanish is their official language in the country and so the lingua franca in San Andrés.

To conclude, if the Creole Language is not included in the school syllabus, since it does not have a writing system as Spence (2003) stated it, the situation of ignoring Creole teaching may be a cause of language loss.

This study is mainly focused on the role of Creole in a formal setting namely a public English-Spanish bilingual school in San Andrés Island and how the role of the language changes or remains similar at certain levels of instruction of students which are basically elementary and high school. In addition, we want to know whether the students' attitude towards Creole change at those different levels when using the language during regular school activities.

As stated above, it is not clear for the people who do not belong to this insular community the characteristics of the languages in contact who have lived together for a long time. People have misconceptions about vernacular Creoles when they consider that those are low level varieties and that their use is restricted in informal settings as those of close

friends meetings and that they are not admitted in other places where prestigious languages are dominant.

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our study will be focused on the oral production of the Creole Language in a formal classroom scenario in the Island of San Andrés. The following are our research questions:

- 1- *What is the role of Creole in a public bilingual school in the island of San Andrés?*
- 2- *What perceptions do students of elementary and high school have about Creole and the use of it inside and outside the school?*
- 3- *To what extent does the teacher impede, stimulate or remain neutral in cases in which Creole is used in the classroom?*
- 4- *How do experts see the use of Creole in terms of its importance?*



## **4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **4.1. Definition of terms**

Since this paper covers some aspects related to sociolinguistic aspects derived from the use of a creole language, and its intention is to discuss some of them, we consider important to briefly define some of those concepts for the better understanding of our project.

Pidgin: This is a concept used to refer to a language variety –form of language— for communication that a group of people who speak different languages use to be able to communicate with one another.

Pidgin is not the native language of anyone but rather a mixture of two or more languages. Women use the pidgin language when they are working in a communal kitchen, adult men talk pidgin in their work field. That pidgin develops into a Creole Language with expanded grammar and vocabulary and a range certain functions.

It is a variety of language that is not the native language of anyone, but is learned in contact situations. (Spolsky, 1998)

Creole: A pidgin once it has native speakers (Trudgill, 2000) Creolization happens when there are changes in a pidgin as a result of adding vitality or mother tongue speakers. Creoles are derived from pidgins as the result of people whose languages differ. Once those who speak pidgin have descendants, if they speak the pidgin to their children, this is not called pidgin any longer but Creole. In the case of the language spoken in San Andrés, the original pidginization is the result of the contact of English (this Creole grammar is English-based) indigenous misquito languages, African voices and Spanish. “English creoles (that is, creolized Pidgin English) are widely spoken in the West Indies by people of

African descent. In their ‘purest’ form these creoles are not immediately comprehensible to English speakers, although the vocabulary is similar, and they show fairly considerable influence from African languages” (Trudgill, 2000)

Language Loss: It is a process by which speakers of a language slowly stop using it, resulting in its dying out. (Spolsky, 1998) and it is held to be as serious as the loss of an animal or bird species. As Holmes (2001) says: “when all the people who speak a language die, the language dies with them”

Language Loyalty: This refers to the ability (or lack of it) to stand up to the pressure of more powerful languages (Spolsky, 1998)

Language Shift: These are the changes in the degree of functional use from one language to another. This happens when a particular community gradually abandons its original native language and goes over to speaking another one instead (Trudgill, 2000)

Language Education Policy: This refers to the policy determining which languages should be taught and learned.

Now that our study is related to minority languages spoken in the island of San Andrés we chose some literature to support the study. The following articles seem to be highly relevant since they may be addressing facts that occur in the island of San Andrés.

In a quantitative study conducted by Florez (2006) with Raizales from San Andrés and Old Providence, the researcher investigated the attitudes of Raizales towards Spanish, English and Islander, the name the author gives to Creole. Since the findings by Florez (2006) are highly relevant to our study, we will offer details in the ensuing paragraphs. Florez (2006), stated her findings under three categories: gender and age, immigrants (Colombians from

mainland), and multilingualism, all related to the use of English, Spanish, and islander (Creole). The findings related to gender and age show that the older generation inhabitants of San Andrés and Old Providence present more favorable attitudes towards Islander and English than the younger generation, and the younger generation shows more favorable attitudes towards Spanish because they are more exposed to this language than older generations. Concerning the findings on gender, Florez (2006) reports that males from both islands show the same favorable attitude towards Islander and English. In contrast, the females from San Andrés show favorable attitudes towards Spanish since these women have the tendency to work and interact in the neighborhoods whose inhabitants are mostly continentals from Colombia. On the other hand, the women from Old Providence are more traditional and prefer Creole.

The second findings category in Florez (2006) suggests that the immigrants in the island of Old Old Providence have preferences for Islander as compared to those who live in San Andrés. As a matter of fact, this is one of the biggest differences between the two islands which seem to suggest that immigrants in Old Providence are more integrated into the Raizal community than their counterparts in San Andrés.

The last finding in Florez (2006) reports on the participants' attitudes towards multilingualism. The author reports that for the male participants in San Andrés, multilingualism has relevance in their daily lives. Most inhabitants in San Andrés Island have jobs related to tourism (hotel and/or restaurant waiters). As a matter of fact, this labor condition is more common in the island of San Andrés than in Old Providence, since in Old Providence tourism is not as strong as in San Andrés. As a result of the number of jobs that tourism yields, most participants consider that speaking more than one language is an

advantage. In addition, the participants reported that everybody on the Archipelago should speak at least two languages. Florez's (2006) findings suggested that few of the participants think that children might be confused when learning more than one language and few participants think that only one language is needed for people to live on the islands.

The researcher highlighted that although Spanish is a language with most of the power today in the islands, English still remains important in the religious domains where the Raizales participate. Because English is the heritage language of the religion practiced by most of the inhabitants in the island, this language is highly regarded and embraced with pride.

To conclude, Florez (2006) recommends that more research needs to be conducted to study how Spanish and Islander instruction is given to learners in a classroom scenario in San Andrés Island. Our study seeks to address this void in the literature.

As researchers we are also interested in studying the attitudes of speakers of the so called low prestige languages, who have to interact with their language and culture with dominant languages and cultures. We consider the qualitative study by Beck and Lam (2008) important to our study. This study was conducted in Upper Necaxa Totonac, a language of East-Central Mexico, Valley, in two different villages: Chicontla and Patla in Sierra Norte of Puebla State.

Beck and Lam (2008) revealed in their findings the negative attitudes Totonac speakers have toward their own language and how parents choose deliberately not to transmit Totonac to their children. As a consequence, children do not learn neither their traditional language nor their culture. One aspect that Beck and Lam (2008) pointed out as negative

contributor's way to these attitudes towards low prestige languages is the fact that most of the Mexican society refers to indigenous languages as Dialects not as languages, since minority languages do not have a grammar structural. The authors also pointed out that parents consider Spanish as the language of success in the external world, and that learning Spanish being a child facilitates the proficiency in that language. Therefore, people who learn Spanish have a higher prestige in terms of social status, and Totonac is seen as a language of ignorance and poverty, since people who learn Spanish have access to better jobs and educative opportunities compared to those who only speak Totonac.

This article contributes conceptually to our thesis because the authors remark the fact that language attitudes might be considered as a negative consequence of the loss of identity between generations. Parents in Mexican indigenous cultures prefer their own children to be Spanish-dominant instead of keeping their native language and culture. We can take the situation presented in this article as a reference to see if the same phenomenon is occurring in the island of San Andrés, since through the imposition of the Spanish language the islanders may be in a situation of language loss. As Denison (1977) suggested, in San Andrés people coexist with 3 languages: Standard English, Spanish, and Creole and we do not know to what extent Creole might be losing importance due to the contact with these other two dominant languages.

Another point of view is the issue of bilingualism which is a real situation in the island of San Andrés. This issue is addressed in a study by Mejia (2005) who emphasizes the importance that many Colombians give to majority languages such as English, Spanish, German, French and the negative attitudes Colombians have towards minority languages such as English-based Creole, Spanish-based Creole. De Mejia (2005) refers to the

multilingual reality in the island of San Andrés which is reflected in the educational system. De Mejia (2005) is useful for us because it discovers those bilingual policies that are imposed to the minority populations, such as the accessing to a socially accepted form of bilingualism to be employed in the global marketplace (English-based Creole, Spanish-based Creole).

This piece of information also gives us some insights about the prevalence that the majority language has over the languages of the minority groups in spite of the fact that in the case of Colombia, the Colombian Constitution of 1991 recognizes the minority languages as the co- official language of each ethnic minority group. De Mejia tells us that we need to become aware of those issues.

Another issue to take into consideration as a basic foundation for this study is language policy and language planning. According to Spolsky (1998) “when sociolinguists started to be involved in the 1950s and 1960s, they preferred the term language planning as the term for any effort to modify language form or use. In the late 1980s, the regular failure of national planning activities seems to have encouraged the more neutral-seeming term, language policy”. Those activities of governments having to do with language can be described as instances of language planning and in our study, as described in the introduction, the imposition of Spanish over other language is a clear case of language policy on the side of the official position of the Colombian government over the will of the islanders. In cases where “governments unfortunately regard linguistic minorities as potentially ‘subversive’, they may react very differently and foolishly fail to perceive that minority language communities which are recognized as such and well treated, for example in education, are less likely to become disaffected” Trudgill (2000)

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

For this particular research study, we have included a method of observation, interview with open-ended questions for the experts in the topic of Creole, and semi structured interviews to the six teachers. We also applied questionnaires for the students. These processes are typically used in qualitative research. As a matter of fact, a great deal of qualitative data was presented. Qualitative Research is all about exploring issues; understanding phenomena and answering questions, based on feelings and beliefs. (Ereaut, 2002).

- a. **Context:** our study was conducted at Linval High School. The school had an enrollment of 804 students among *Raizales* (name given to those people native from San Andrés and Old Providence) and *Continetales* (name given to those Colombians from the mainland who havemigrated to the islands). The school is well known for its bilingual (English and Spanish) program. The school has a number of 37 teachers among *Raizales* and *Continetales*. The school is located in a traditionally Raizal neighborhood of the Island of San Andrés called Barrack, *La Loma*.
- b. **Participants:** We have observed students from different courses in a Spanish-English bilingual school. These students are from first, fifth, in elementary school and two sixth grade groups, and one ninth grade group, from high intermediate school. Now, a description of the people involved in the study is of relevant importance to understand and comprehend what is going on in the school regarding the use of Creole.

The first grade participants were both Raizal and continental students. The teacher was a Raizal teacher. In fifth grade the participants were also mixed and the teacher was Raizal. The participants from sixth B, the majority were Raizal and five of them were continental with a higher level of English based on the standards of the institution.

The school staff has stated that those who have a higher level of English should be in the same group, as a matter of fact those who are in sixth A are considered by the institution to be excellent at English, and those who are in sixth B are considered to have a medium level management of English, and being so, those in sixth C are those students whose English level is low.

The teacher in sixth B was a Raizal teacher; she was in charge of teaching English. The teacher of sixth C was continental and has been living in the island for many years. She asserts that in many occasion she understands Creole, but she is not able to speak it. She was in charge of teaching Religion. Most of the ninth grade students are Raizales but their teacher being observed was continental.

### **c. The teachers**

We have a participation of six teachers from the *Linval Bilingual School* whose classes were observed. Those teachers are:

Adriana, the preschool teacher, was born in the Island of San Andrés and for this reason she is considered Raizal. Her title is *Licenciada en Gestión de Proyectos de Educación Bilingüe*.

Ana Llerena is the Spanish teacher in high school; she is continental (Colombian mainland) and her title is *Licenciada en Educación Básica Primaria*.



Mónica is the teacher of informatics; she is from Barranquilla and she has been living in the island for 15 years. She speaks Spanish and she is studying English, she is in the 7th level of English in an institution in the island. Her professional title is *Técnico en Sistemas y Maestro Bachiller*.

Adriana is the fifth grade teacher. She is in charge of teaching all the subject matters in the curriculum. She is from San Andrés and she is able to speak Spanish, English and Creole, her mother tongue. Her professional title is *Licenciada en Gestión Bilingüe* from the Christian University.

Texana is a Raizal teacher and she currently teaches Spanish to the sixth grade learners. Her professional title is *Licenciada en Idiomas*.

Orleth O’Neal is a Raizal teacher who teaches English to sixth graders. Her professional title is *Máster en Idiomas con énfasis en Inglés*.

#### **d. Classroom setting**

The classrooms are comfortable for the students and the teacher. The rooms are quite big. Some of the student’s desks are in good condition. The walls are well painted, but the fans do not run properly. The teacher chair seems to be a bit small. A classroom setting is relevant for students learning since environment makes part of the learning process.

#### **e. Data source and analysis**

From the months of June up to the month of July, Bibiana, Yanet, and Fayshell spent one day per week observing the role of the English-based Creole in a public bilingual

school in the island of San Andrés. We documented the observations through field notes. Toward the end of the observations, we videotaped some of the classes to have vivid evidence of the role of Creole in the classrooms.

The three of us conducted semi structure open-ended interviews to some of the teachers of the school and three island born experts in linguistic issues... The interviews with the teachers were semi- structured and lasted 8 to 10 minutes and the interviews with the experts have duration of one hour. The interviews with the teachers were made to confirm or disprove our research questions. All of these interviews were audio taped and transcribed. In addition, the director of the institution and the coordinator participated in informal interviews during the observations.

#### **5.1.1. Interviews**

We will conduct one interview at the end of the study with the teacher to confirm or contrast what we found throughout the observations. We will audio record the interview and transcribe it for analysis. (See appendix 1) According to McNamara (1999), the interview is a particularly useful tool to gather the story behind the participants' experiences. Additional, Patton (1990) explains that through interviews we can find out information that the researchers cannot directly observe.

#### **5.1.2. Questionnaires**

We will conduct one questionnaire at the end of the research project to 8 students. Four students are the focal students, and the other four will be for other students. This questionnaire will give us insights about the student's backgrounds. (See appendix 2)

This questionnaire is aligned with our study because we will focus in the use of Creole and how often it is used in different contexts.

## **5. RESEARCHER'S ROLE**

The three researcher's role consists in taking field notes of everything's that occurs in the natural scenario of specific classes already mentioned. The researchers were complete observers; which mean that the researchers were present in the scene of action, but do not interact or participate. The role each one of us assumed was to take notes of every single thing got to do with the role Creole plays in the classroom setting. The three researchers were in different classes.

A complete observer is defined by Merriam (1998) as the: "role assumed by the researcher in which there is no interaction between researcher and participants". In our case we did not interact whatsoever with the learners and teachers being observed. That interaction happens when interviews or questionnaires are applied for the purpose of data gathering.

## **6. FINDINGS**

The use of the Creole language more than being a recognized dialect, it represents a significant meaning for those who use it. The inhabitants of the island of San Andrés consider the language as part of their identity in their culture and daily activities. Creole is considered the bridge that carries the user to the interaction with others, such as friends and any other relatives. For many people it is normal to say that the language they use for informal communication is English, (Caribbean English) instead of saying that it is Creole. This error seems to occur among a good part of the living generation in the island. Due to the settlement of the English puritans, the Raizal community of the island considers their Creole language as the English language.

In addition the Creole language also constitutes for the speakers an endowment that goes from generation to generation. It is the language that keeps the Raizal as one community, in other words united.

### **a. Creole as a sign of identity among users**

According to the observations we collected we have noticed the frequent use of Creole in a formal scenario among students and teachers is determined by some external cultural, ethnics and social factors

“cuando se hizo la emancipación el esclavo tuvo más influencia en el desarrollo sociocultural de la isla era el esclavo de casa por consiguiente el creole; el creole era un idioma del esclavo de campo mientras el ingles caribeño era el idioma del esclavo de casa. Ahora esa persona en la parte del manejo de los intereses públicos en el manejo de la iglesia que es lo mas importante que aun el inglés pero no hay ninguna iglesia que maneja el creole dentro de su estructura lingüística aún rezamos en inglés” (Interview 2, lines 89-95)

“Hay otros niños a la inversa que son nativos raizales que si yo les hablo en español ellos me contesta en inglés creole y si yo soy la que no les entiendo me dicen yo no hablo en español” (Int 7 Carol)

Holmes (2001) describes this situation of switching for affective functions as follows:

The use of Jamaican Creole or Patois alongside standard English by those who belong to the Afro-Caribbean or West Indian Black communities in Britain follows similar patterns to those described above for a range of multilingual and bilingual communities. At school, for instance, Black British children use Patois to their friends and Standard English to their teachers.

As for the British Black communities described by Holmes, in San Andrés people speak Spanish and Creole for certain purposes and, therefore, there is a diglossic phenomenon in which Creole has the role of vernacular, familiar language. As Forbes comments on the use of the language “el creole nunca ha estado en el culto oficialmente, el culto sigue siendo en inglés pero la gente cuchichea en creole” (Interview 3, lines 117-119)

What Forbes comments is a typical case of diglossia which has three crucial features:

1. Two distinct varieties of the same language are used in the community, with one regarded as a high (or H) variety and the other a low (or L) variety.
2. Each variety is used for quite distinct functions; H and L complement each other.
3. No one uses the H variety in everyday conversation.  
(Holmes, 2001)

For the case being studied, there is no doubt we are facing H and L varieties whose uses are perfectly recognized by the users and observed by the researchers. Carol, one of the Raizal teachers at Linval School comments:

“La mayoría a de las personas de la isla piensan que el creole es el idioma de los raizales para la comunicación entre ellos en sus casas y sus amigos pero para usarlo en el aula de clase o la iglesia no”. (Interview 7, lines 18-20)

We also perceived the freedom creole language gives to the users, since children feel comfortable when speaking it in any moment of the class. Creole provides confident and

trust to the students when time comes to discuss or develop a specific activity, such as asking questions to the teacher and classmates.

i. Emotional factors that increase the use of Creole

Most of the time in the classroom, Creole is used as a tool to call student's attention, in occasion it is also used to call those who do not speak the Creole language. However, the use of Creole may be interrupted by some subjects such as the Spanish class, in which children must speak Spanish; or in English class, still the Creole keeps being used mainly orally when learners interact inside and outside the classroom.

Teachers communicate with the students according to their mother tongue, if a teacher comes from San Andrés Island; she uses Creole, if the teacher comes from any city from Colombia, she uses Spanish, in the case of learners, they prefer to use Creole to interact between themselves, so if the class is with a Continental teacher and she speaks Spanish the Creole language remains in the class by students to make reference to themes different to the class, but inside the class.

## **7.2. Reasons to use Creole**

It is evident that one of the reasons to use Creole is because it does not represent a conventional rule. Everyone talks it in the way they feel more comfortable. Neither teachers nor students want to make effort when speaking it and Creole does not represent any effort when using it.

Another reason to use Creole language, is because is the Home Language, it means is the language learners listen while they are at home.

Besides, Creole language does not have a complex writing as English language, further while talking in Creole language its users do not need to think about grammar structures, since it comes as spontaneous speech.

Moreover in the Raizal context the Creole language has an own status, which is its use for informal communication, so the Creole language has a higher status than English in the society of San Andrés, then Spanish still remains in formal situations.

### **7.3. Use of Creole by teachers at the school**

Depending on teacher's origin the use of Creole is given. If the teacher is Raizal he/she does her teaching practice in Creole language, she/he interacts with the students in their native language, but if the teacher is Continental, she/he teaches in Spanish, however when students go to her in Creole language the teacher understands what they say, but answers them in Spanish language. The children are not encouraged to use Creole neither are not punished when using it.

### **7.4. Use of Creole among students**

Spanish speaking children have been embedded in this language, since the Creole language is known by all the students, even Continental students who do not speak it, can comprehend it, by listening comprehension. Colombian mainland speakers understand



Creole language; their mother tongue continues to be the language in which they interact with Creole speakers, and Spanish speakers. Both Spanish and Creole continue being used and taught throughout the rest of their school life , and the use of English is invisible among the students.

## **7.5. Social emotional and ethnical reasons to use Creole in the classroom**

### **7.5.1. Ethnical motivations**

There is a great influence it the adults. Parents and grandparents make that creole remains as an identity culture in San Andrés Island, since they have constant use of Creole while they interact with their families and friends, in this way Creole is has been transmitted from home to school.

Another important aspect in the ethnical motivation is keeping the cultural identity through customs, traditions and beliefs that make them feel and think with an authentic lifestyle.

### **7.5.2. Social reasons**

The linguistics experience depends on the speakers, the use of Creole is given according to the language users, if is an interaction only between Raizal users, that interaction is in Creole, if is an interaction between Raizal and Continental speakers they change to Spanish language.

### **7.5.3. Emotional reasons**

Learners attitude become more spontaneous when speaking Creole, different from when speaking Spanish, since when Raizal learners speak Spanish the attitude changes, the voice tone is reduced and they make gestures that express discomfort.

#### **7.6. Importance of creole to keep identity**

It is important to the Raizales to remain their language (Creole) alive since it is a pride and part of their region endowment. In addition to, this language is recognized in the Colombian Constitution of 1991 as patrimonial heritage. Despite the fact that San Andrés is part of Colombia the previous fact characterizes them for being different from continental people. Thus, they have already structured their Raizal culture that makes them to act and think differently. Besides, not forgiving their roots, culture, traditions and insight means that they respect their creole language.

#### **7.7. Avoidance of the teaching of Creole at school.**

From the point of view of the educational authorities of the Island of San Andrés, the Creole language cannot be taught at school since it does not have a grammar, vocabulary nor a linguistic corpus and being so, the teaching should be done in English which does have a linguistic corpus. The evidence can be observed from the points of view of the local authorities and their representative Mr. Dionisio Brown for whom “No es muy posible enseñar Física, Química en Creole.” (Interview 1, 397-404).

Mr. Brown, who represents the local authority as the Coordinator of Ethnoeducation and Bilingualism, considers that “no es posible porque tienes que revertir en Inglés o Español en Creole... no existe como hacerlo... yo tendría unos quinientos años para construir eso.” (Br Int.1 397-404)

We consider that the discussion here displayed has some similarities to other discussions in multilingual communities in which the languages in contact have different statuses being those: high prestige and low prestige linguistic varieties. Beck and Lam (2008) discuss that in the case of the Mexican society, the low prestige language, Totonac, is referred to as a dialect of minorities which does not have a grammar structure.

These considerations are also shared by some of the teachers of the school where this study was conducted. One of the answers refer to the lack of alphabet of the language; “yo pienso que no debería enseñarse en el aula de clase porque es un idioma que todavía no tiene definido un alfabeto.” (Interview 5 1&2)

For others, now that Creole is the vernacular language of the Raizal community, it should not be taught at school since the students already speak it:

“yo considero que ya es la lengua materna de nosotros y generalmente lo que utilizamos en la cotidianidad.”(Interview 4 1&2).

We consider that the previous teacher’s position is related with a study made about learners attitudes toward Creole in an educational environment in Nicaragua by Spence (2003) who argues that a Creole language could be used as a tool for teaching, since the students learn more easily in their mother tongue, nevertheless a Creole language may not be considered an object of teaching, because of its lack of writing elements. To our understanding, this means that even though Creole variants do not have in some cases written standardized forms, they do have the category of knowledge transit languages that, at some point, contribute in the learning of not only other variants but also the comprehension of current subject matters at school.

According to the applied questionnaires to students from different grades, in the question in which the learner's linguistic preference is asked, their answers were:

63% of the students expressed preferences toward the use of Creole for the teaching of classes, since it is the language they understand and they speak at home. Meanwhile a 34% of the students are in favor with Spanish and the 3% of the students are in favor with English. In contrast to the experts and the teachers, who consider Creole language a language with no linguistic corpus, besides of being a language that children already speak. The questionnaires also reveal that the 78% of the students assert that speaking Creole has more advantages for them. And the 19% said that English is the language that gives them more advantages; and finally, the 3% considers that Spanish is the language that offers them better opportunities.

Due to Creole is the language of the Raizal people: (question 9 grade student porque el Creole es el idioma de los Raizales).

#### **7.8. Use of Creole at school.**

The Creole language is seen as a bridging language between English and Spanish and now that Creole is the vernacular language for an important part of the population it can not be ignored in the classroom.

“En la escuela Bautista hay un intento de educación bilingüe, enseñar el Creole como puente al Inglés como puente al Español, hijos de continentales aprenden Creole y Español en la secundaria porque hay escasez de profesores, yo enseño Inglés en el colegio Bautista me toca explicar en creole o hacer que ellos digan

en creole y me toca explicar en Español a los continentales.” (Interview 3, 120-127).

On the other hand one of the teachers interviewed considers that the Colombian mainland students should understand creole, but mainly learn English, since from English to creole there is one step.

“Bueno creo que el continental debiera de aprender a entender el creole pero a prender el Inglés estándar definitivamente por que del creole al inglés estándar hay un paso. Un paso que lo seria la gramática y de alguna manera algunos punticos de pronunciación pero si creo que el continental debería aprender a entender lo que se dice en creole pero aprender a hablar inglés estándar.”( Interview 6, 48-52)

In contrast with the statement mention above, this teacher discusses that Creole is useful to give instructions and to have some kind of introduction to English, but Creole is not useful in English learning because learners can get some confusion with Creole.

“La ventaja que tiene el creole usándolo con los raizales y para dar instrucciones y para llegar al inglés y al español más fácil con ellos y desventaja es que perjudica mucho la enseñanza del inglés los niños se basan bastante en el creole y no quieren pasar del creole al inglés estándar.”(Interview 5 11-14).

In a study conducted by Spence (2003) supported by Bernstein (1973) who declares that minority languages are the principal factor that increase in the scholar failure, this situation is detected in minority social groups.

In the questionnaires applied to the students, they argue that the teacher uses Creole language to clarify, to redefine instruction, and to present any topic. This is shown by the question number eleven: “¿En que idioma interactúa comúnmente con el profesor en el aula de clase?”

Besides they confirmed that Creole language is the most used language by the teachers during the classes, this can be noticed in question number 12 as most of the learners agree that creole is mostly used in the classroom.

#### **7.8.1. PEI as a support for majority languages**

The school as an official institution recognizes its need of including Spanish and English teaching as majority languages in the PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional).

- ✓ Lograr la comprensión clara del idioma español tanto oral como escrito, debido a la importancia que tiene para el estudiante por ser la lengua nacional.
- ✓ Entender la importancia del idioma inglés como parte de nuestra cultura y aprender a leer, escribir y comprenderla para nuestro uso diario.
- ✓ Desarrollar un proceso académico bilingüe (inglés - español), en todas las actividades del plantel, curriculares, socio culturales y religiosas.

From the point of view of the interviewed teachers: as a bilingual institution it is important to teach English and Spanish. “Como colegio bilingüe es importante por una justa causa o

razón que enseñe el inglés e español porque si no lo enseña ya deja de ser bilingüe”. (T Int.5 81-82). Besides, English is an international language that opens doors to labor and study opportunities. “Una de las razones, es que el inglés es un idioma internacional que abre puertas, y esto es una opción muy positiva para el futuro de nuestros jóvenes”.(T Int. 1... p).

Since San Andrés belongs to Colombia, the PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional) recognizes the importance of learning Spanish as the official language as English as a language that is part of their culture.

Taking into considerations the questionnaires and the observations, we noticed that the teachers have a constant use of Creole, in spite of the interviews they answered that Creole must not be taught, they use it for the classes, during the class occurs.

During the interview we ask the teachers the question:

¿Usted piensa que el creole debería ser enseñado en el aula?  
No, porque considero que ya es la lengua materna de nosotros y generalmente es lo utilizamos en la cotidianidad. (Interview 4, 5-7).

This means that the teacher recognizes the importance of teaching English and Spanish, they use Creole since is the language they use daily.

The PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional) proposes the Bilingual education as a bridge for students to reach out technological and scientific learning. We read in the school’s PEI in chapter III whose title is *Filosofía*:

“La formación en los principios de la etnoeducación como fundamento para afianzar los procesos de identidad y socialización que le permita responder a las consecuencias de la interculturalidad y el avance científico y tecnológico. La educación bilingüe será uno de los medios para lograr estos principios”.

The educational authorities, from the Bilingual and Ethno Education Program Department state that the teaching in the Island should be considered in the English language only; which they want to become the first language of the Raizal community and Spanish as the second language. The use of Creole is not considered as part of the language planning in bilingualism or language policies for the islanders.

”Lo que tratamos de apuntar nosotros acá es constituir para el hablante nativo, el muchacho de hoy, una primera lengua formal y es el Inglés, entonces el Español sería una segunda lengua y el Creole el que lo quiere mantener lo puede mantener.” (Interview 1 117-119).

Now that Creole is not recognized as an official language by the Colombian Government and English is historically closer to the Raizal community, therefore, English should be the first language:

”La idea es constituir el Inglés en primera lengua de los Raizales, hay necesidad urgente, manifiesta, de que el nativo tenga una primera lengua formal y la más cercana y la más adecuada en estos momentos sería el Inglés”. (Interview 1 248-250).

Beck and Lam (2008) pointed that language loss may respond to political and cultural reasons and in San Andrés those reasons are associated to the fact that the educational authorities give more importance to English rather than to Creole, since educational



authorities accept English as part of its history. In addition, they think that Spanish should be taught as the second language.

### **7.8.2. The use of the Creole inside the classroom**

If taking into account the point of view of the local educational authorities of the Islands it is not easy for the teachers to use the English language all the time, although they do have certain degree of proficiency in the language. Because the teachers feel confident speaking in their first language (Creole), more than in English, besides the teachers do not have to make any effort to speak in English now that they use their vernacular language.

“Si, hay una lucha con el mismo docente, o sea no es fácil para el docente utilizar el Inglés aunque sepa el Inglés, pero no es fácil utilizar el Inglés en su salón de clase porque primero se siente mejor hablando Creole sin hacer un esfuerzo de hablar el inglés.” (Interview 1 28-130).

Evidence that supports the point the educational authority stated was confirmed in the observation to the fifth grade group.

During the observation in the religion class we noticed the teacher uses Creole frequently.

Es cambio de clase los niños están desordenados, dos de ellos están corriendo por todo el salón uno tras otro se escucha demasiado ruido todos hablan al mismo tiempo y se alcanza a escuchar que lo están haciendo en creole ya que ninguna palabra es distinguida por mi. Todos excepto Sam que esta hablando con un compañero y le dice “déjeme salir hágale “el otro niño le habla en creole. Desde el momento que ingresó al salón la profesora Carol se dirige a ellos haciéndolo en creole, llamando la atención de todos los estudiantes en este mismo idioma. Solo en un pequeño momento les dice a los chicos “por favor saquen el cuaderno de

religión” pero aún el salón esta en desorden algunos están de pie y los demás están hablando en voz alta y también hay dos niños con escoba en mano barriendo el salón. (Obs 5<sup>th</sup>1-9).

The questionnaires also reveal the preferences students have toward Creole when they answered question number five.

En el ambiente de colegio cual es la lengua que mas utiliza con sus amigos o compañeros cuando esta en el descanso es:

53% of the students say they prefer to use Creole to interact between themselves. While 41% of the students expressed favorable attitudes toward Spanish, 3% prefer Creole and Spanish and finally 3% prefer Creole and English.

As Florez (2004) who perceived that the autochthonous language, it is important for informal purposes, so that it can be said that Creole speakers use Creole informality as integration with the Raizal community.

### **7.8.3. Teaching of Creole at school is avoided**

Some discussions can be made on the possibility for the vernacular Creole language to be taught. Some of the educational authorities of the island consider that in the case of their language, indeed, it can not be formally taught. According to the official representative languages cannot be invented, if so it is needed to construct a phonetics system and make it official:

”Y una lengua no se inventa y habría que construir todo un sistema fonético, en otras palabras habría que convertir esa lengua Criolla en una formal, formalizarla”.  
(Interview 1, 97-99)

Due to the lack of linguistic components in the Creole language it cannot be include in the schools syllabus. According to Spence (2003) Creole languages may not be part of School syllabus because they do not have a writing system, orthography or a variety of official standard language.

Another reason that supports the fact of not to include the Creole language in the syllabus, is because the local government do not see the purpose of teaching it. As Jessie pointed out: “... no, el currículo escolar no incluye Creole porque simplemente el Estado desde su representación local del gobierno local no les ha interesado el Creole.”(Interview 2, 388-392).

#### **7.8.4. Use of Creole throughout the school life**

From the teacher’s perspective the Creole language will not be lost, since it is the language of the homes. There is an evident maintenance of the language in the home environment. According to T 5 the role of Creole will continue as a basic element of communication in the native homes, but as it does not have an established alphabet it cannot be written and for this reason the Creole language will be kept in the cultural aspect of the island.

“El papel del Creole seguirá como es un elemento de comunicación básico para cuestiones hogareñas, pero como no tiene un alfabeto establecido no se puede escribir por ende permanecerá como parte cultural de nuestras islas”. (Interview 5, 56-58).

On the other hand one of the interviewed teachers considered that the Creole language is a mixture of Spanish and English that would keep its influence as it occurs with a language or a dialect. Sometimes the influence passes away and sometimes it goes. It develops.

“Pasará a ser algo como el Spanglish, siempre tendrá una influencia, pero esto pasa con un idioma con un dialecto, siempre esta influencia ocurre, unas veces se queda, otras veces se va, evoluciona. (Interview 2)

In contrast with the previous two interviewees the following teacher considers that Creole may be lost, since the local government requires teachers to speak Standard English.

“A mi pensar yo creo que si seguimos trabajando como venimos si se va a desaparecer de la isla como el gobierno insiste que hablemos en inglés estándar con el español entonces de pronto desaparece”. (Interview 3 lines 456-457)

Spence (2003) argues that Creole languages have had a lack of official recognition, also these languages have had to struggle for legitimacy like Tok-Pisin from New Guinea, now recognized as official language, the Papiamentu from Aruba and Curacao, that are getting a place in education programs, attempting to be standardized. Spence (2003) also affirms that it has been an intention from linguistics and Creole communities to establish Creole languages at school, but the local governments have not allowed it.

In addition, when learners were asked to answer the question about their linguistic identification, they expressed one more time their preferences towards their mother vernacular tongue, since 56% of the students showed favorable attitude towards the use of Creole, meanwhile 31% prefer Spanish to English while 13% prefer English to the other two. (Questionnaire, 13)

### **7.9. Problems arise to recognize Creole as language**

The Creole language is not considered a language, with the different components a language needs; it is treated as an oral language that presents a mixture between English and Spanish without using any grammar structures, as Brown confirms:

“El Creole de hoy en día es una mezcla de inglés y español mal hablado”.

(Interview 1 )

Creole does not have an evident acceptance as an independent variety, although it is a language made up or derived from two official languages (Spanish, English).

Nevertheless several Raizal inhabitants treat their Creole, not as a linguistic corpus, but as a cultural aspect that characterizes San Andrés citizens, and is strongly linked to identity. One of the islanders comments:

“Mucha gente quiere que desaparezca, porque no le ven la importancia, pero el Creole es nuestra identidad”. (Interview 2)

Cultural attitudes emerged towards Creole that identifies it as something of their own.

“Vuelvo y insisto mi hermana y su esposo son Raizales viven en un territorio Raizal, y sus hijos no hablan creole. Saben hablar el creole lo entienden y lo hablan. Pero ellos se comunican en español debería ser lo contrario son ejemplos donde es importante de modo que las personas de afuera valoren nuestro idioma. Que nosotros lo valoremos y que nosotros lo pongamos en el estándar que se merece. Antes del español el problema era con el inglés y si tú haces una observación los Raizales no rezamos en creole y supuestamente es una expresión espiritual entre el hombre. Yo soy Raizal mi lengua es creole pero es tan metido ese que nosotros rezamos en inglés” (Interview 2, lines 389-398)

The importance of learning Creole for those who either need or have to stay in the Island of San Andrés provides different opinions even among Raizal teachers. If Creole is treated as

a cultural aspect it is evident the position of learning it as belonging and becoming part of this Creole context as in this statement: “claro, si piensa quedarse, y si piensa estar en el medio como parte cultural de cada quien deben manejar el Creole”. (Interview 5 lines 99-100) In other words, the use of Creole is part of being in the Island and to feel that you are part of it, but it does not necessarily mean that the language is needed to survive. As one of the interviewees’ comments:

“Yo dicto clase en el (...) por el ejemplo el 90 porciento de los estudiantes de (...) no son monolingüe en español y es muy difícil el ambiente escolar y la cultura escolar es horrible para los raizales por que los que no tienen las competencias para hablar en español se quedan, o quedan muy mal parados, y eso atrasa su proceso y por otro lado estamos hablando del colegio de los niños de los papis y mamis más ricos de San Andrés (...) imagínese es un complicate total.”(Interview 2, lines 239-246)

However, another point of view considers the Creole language is not necessary to learn, even to remain in the Island, (T 4 int 39-41)

“No, no si no se va a quedar a vivir en la isla; no lo veo necesario, particularmente aunque sea que se quede aquí no le veo la necesidad”.

Creole persists in the cultural environment since it holds the populations to recognitions part of their own identity.

In contrast to the observations we got, we conclude that Creole has a need to be learned, since teachers use it to call learner’s attention, to redefine instruction and sometimes the interaction between teacher and students it is given in the Creole language....also learners use it to interact between themselves or to develop any task during the classes.

Observation: a Spanish class with 6 graders:

The Spanish teacher is Raizal, during our observations we noticed that when she calls Spanish speakers students attention she does it in Spanish.

During the class the students and the teacher were doing a discussion related to a reading, and then one of the learners (continental) gave an opinion without being asked, so the teacher answers him: *“No estoy hablando contigo no seas irrespetuoso”*

This teacher uses Creole language to refer to Creole speakers; probably the teacher does this unconsciously although her class is in Spanish. At the moment of calling student's attention the presence of Creole is visible.

While the class was going on, one of the learners (Raizal) started going out and in the classroom, so the teacher said him *“hey we yu guain”*, this means where are you going.

Observing the same group with the English teacher who is a Raizal, we perceived that occasionally Creole is used to clarify specific issues of the English vocabulary.

The English teacher was teaching the adjectives, and to relate the adjective thin she used Creole language as a bridge to linking the meaning of the word in Creole language:

*“wi se in Creole miga but the right word in English is thin”* (We say in Creole *miga* but the right word in English is thin)

In contrast to the observations we got, we conclude that Creole has a need to be learned, since teachers use it to call learner's attention, to redefine instruction and sometimes the interaction between teacher and students it is given in the Creole language....also learners use it to interact between themselves or to develop any task during the classes.

Francis (2005) argues, Haitians are best treated by the mother or first tongue, the instruction dominates in the first four years and includes the simultaneous introduction of the national second language. Gradually the students transition into French instruction in —context-reduced academic curricular areas. French (national language) shifts from being a subject into being the medium of instruction.

According to Francis (2005), research on child bilingualism suggests that primary school instruction should not be restricted to any one language, but should employ two languages in specifically determined roles and amounts.

#### **7.10. Creole is perceived as English**

To better understand this phenomenon, it is worth being said that In the Linval School of San Andrés, there are teachers that come from the San Andrés Island, therefore as Raizales, they know the Creole language and also they use it while they are in the school, those teachers are known as Raizal teachers.

Besides there are teachers who come from different parts of Colombia, they have Spanish language as the first language; they do not interact in Creole, but they understand Creole, those teachers are known as Continental teachers.

There is a tendency of citizens in San Andrés to refer to Creole language as if it were English. Some people consider Creole is just English language, this phenomena occurs since teachers at school do not make clear differences between both languages T 3:



“Puede ser debido a que los profesores no enfatizan lo suficiente para que ellos puedan diferenciar entre el Creole y el Inglés estándar.”

Another reason for this situation is because as Brown stated that “people say to each other they speak English not Creole”... and this idea becomes “a collective idea”:

“...es la situación que se está dando en estos momentos donde hay un grupo allí afuera que les dicen usted no les preste atención que ese Creole es Inglés entonces la gente se ha conformado, mucha gente, los jóvenes son más conscientes de qué realmente se necesita mejorar.”(Interview 1, lines 383-385).

At analyzing the questionnaires we applied, it was showed a high overage the students who consider Creole is the same as English language.

In one of the questions given to children whose aim is to find out the interaction among learners and teachers in the classroom, the results are as follows:

*Cuál es el idioma que utiliza más el profesor en el aula de clase para llamar la atención?*

Two children (who represent 6% of the sampled population) think that creole is the language that the teacher uses the most in the classroom to address their attention, whereas six children (that is 19%) think that it is Spanish the most used language and twenty four (75%) out of the thirty two children consider that the most used language is English. (Quest. 13)

Based on the above, most of the sixth and ninth graders consider Creole as English, while the minority perceive the difference between the two languages.

Another reason is that children are raised in Creole while they are at home, when they are with their families they interact in Creole language, when they arrive at school children have this costume of using Creole and start using it too meanwhile being at school, even when teachers make any question in Standard English, children respond in Creole, unconsciously they are speaking in English. For this aspect of the learning and maintenance of vernacular languages, we can support the thesis of language loyalty as this ability of the speakers of a minority or less prestige language to stand to the pressure of a more prestige or dominant language.

“Los chicos enredan entre el Creole y el Inglés estándar porque en la casa les hablan en Creole ese es el ambiente y cuando llegan acá el docente lo dice en Inglés estándar él lo entiende pero lo habla en Creole un ejemplo el profesor le puede preguntar *where are you going?* ellos saben *we you guain?* es lo mismo *where are you going?* Él lo escucha del docente pero el de nuevo lo dice *weyouguain?* esa es la gran diferencia por eso se le hace énfasis en eso por eso son las clases de inglés del área de inglés en cómo hacer el proceso de conversión del Creole al inglés para que ellos entiendan...pienso que cuando van llegando a la etapa madura del proceso del inglés digamos del inglés avanzado desde el inglés medio ellos podrían ir diciendo yo no puedo decir a si yo tengo que decirlo como el inglés estándar es cuando a allí hablen inglés y conozcan la diferencia los chicos de 6 no pueden hablar de diferencia porque ellos hablan más el Creole que el Inglés estándar que apenas lo está iniciando; ahora, no con esto digo que en primaria no se esté enseñando inglés, están dando inglés estándar pero si hablamos de niños pequeños hasta 11 años hablan puro creole ya cuando están en una etapa más madurita ya empiezan hacer el cambio a inglés estándar y ya pueden hallar la diferencia .cuando un niño de noveno se dirige a la seño él sabe que debe de hacerlo en inglés estándar el si no sabe él dice *I do not know that* pero llega un compañero y le dice *mi no know* esa es la diferencia el niño en su madurez mental en cuanto al sentido de diferencia entre el creole y el estándar yo digo que partiría de séptimo hacia arriba pero los chicos de primaria siempre hablando en creole aunque el docente les de la clase en Inglés.”(Interview 6, lines 119-138)

From the comment above we consider that this is a case of language loyalty since it is at home where vernacular languages are kept, especially by the women who stay at home and interact with their children in creole. Nevertheless there is a certain negative attitude

towards the use of creole instead of English or as a misconception of it. As Fasold (1999) says:

“Highly negative attitudes about pidgins and creoles were very common when they were discussed in published account by Europeans. Mühlhäusler (...) cites examples in which creoles are referred to as: ‘adaptions of French or English to the phonetic and grammatical mentality ... of a linguistically inferior race’ or as ‘a debased mongrel jargon’ or ‘a crude macaronic lingo’. It is less likely now that one would find such blatantly racist and contemptuous descriptions of pidgins and creoles in print, but they are still commonly held in very low regard, the research of linguists notwithstanding”.

### **7.11 . Diglossic phenomenon in the Island of San Andrés**

As for the British Black communities described by Holmes (2001) in San Andrés, people speak Spanish and Creole for certain purposes and, therefore, there is a diglossic phenomenon in which Creole has the role of vernacular, familiar language.

Holmes (2001) describes this situation of switching for affective functions.

“La mayoría de las personas de la isla piensan que el creole es el idioma de los raizales para la comunicación entre ellos en sus casas y sus amigos pero para usarlo en el aula de clase o la iglesia no”. (Interview 7, lines 18-20)

“el creole nunca ha estado en el culto oficialmente, el culto sigue siendo en inglés pero la gente cuchichea en creole” (Interview 3, lines 117-119)

## 8. INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

In the island of San Andrés there are a few numbers of schools that claimed to be bilingual in Standard English and Spanish, but the real situation is that they are strengthening the use of Creole due to various reasons but mainly because there is a coexistence of languages and, therefore, there is a societal bilingualism. Now, from the point of view of the educational authorities Creole should not be used at schools and indeed not to be considered in the English classes, since it would eventually interfere in the process of learning English. Nevertheless the educational authorities also claim that teachers are not prepared to make a step away from Creole and start to consider the teaching of English. In other words, the vernacular language of half of the people in the island still does have strength enough to be thought as disappearing. But even though Creole is part of the cultural heritage of the people, it is also a menace since it represents to some extent one of the reasons why youngsters do not embrace seriously the learning of Standard English.

On the other hand, the school seems to be facing a difficult situation with the use of Creole because they are trying to implement a strong program of English when students are still doubtful with the language they speak and have as mother tongue, in fact teachers need to be aware of the languages they are dealing with at school. They would probably need to strengthen the program taking into account the multilingualism occurring in the school.

Given the limited scope to our study, the findings cannot be claimed to be representative of all the schools of the archipelago of San Andrés. One of the findings that emerge from our study was that the teachers use the language as a medium to address their learners'

attention, and redefine instruction. Based on this phenomenon, the contact of these somehow similar languages could be used by the teachers as a means for creole continuum in terms of complementarity. In other words, authorities and teachers could make profit of the fact that creole is still alive and is a valid vehicle to learn English. Now, of course, learners need to be aware of the fact that what they speak at home is not English.

One possible way to keep Creole from being lost could be the promotion of it at school to reinforce the maintenance of the language and culture.

## **9. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

This project describes the use of the English-based Creole language in an educational context in the island of San Andrés, Colombia. Regarding the multilingual situation in the Archipelago of San Andrés Island, some aspects that could be considered for further research would be suggested. It would be interesting to explore how teachers contribute to the learning process of English for both Raizal and continental students using their mother tongue as a bridge to construct the learning process of English. Another factor that could be considered for further research is how teachers address the phenomenon of multilingualism in the classroom; or teachers attitudes towards multilingualism in the classroom, how could learners be affected with the use of Creole in the English class instead of standard English, why do teachers do not make the difference between both languages. Another line of research could be why do schools claim to be bilingual when having a monolingual curriculum. In addition, research could be done in observing how the implementation of a trilingual program benefits the native Islanders and Colombians mainland in the island of San Andrés.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

The first conclusion based on the evidence given in this paper is: creole keeps on being thoroughly used inside the classroom by both teachers and learners and throughout the different classes being observed.

We conclude that the study we conducted in the Island of San Andrés reveals that Creole does have some status among the users of the institution: learners and teachers use it most of the time and for different reasons. Nonetheless, there is a certain rejection on the side of the authorities to recognize the importance of creole as a way to teach and learn.

Creole language makes part of the cultural aspects of the island, and even among continental people who are to some extent involved in the language and culture of the original Raizal islanders, mostly if taken into account that nowadays more than half of the population in the Island are of continental origin.

Creole as part of a culture and a way of living does not seem to face loss in the near future. Some efforts are being done regarding the maintenance and culture of the language. Nevertheless, these efforts are somehow in isolation since for the educational authorities bilingualism does include only two languages and creole is not one of those.

In spite of the fact that the institution being observed is recognized as English-Spanish Bilingual School, it does not constitute an English-Spanish bilingual program, since inside the classes the teachers give privilege to their native language (Creole), teachers consider that if Creole is used to give some teaching, the learner can understand easily.

It can be noticed that there is a lack of awareness toward the term bilingualism, due to the fact that the classes are taught in Creole and Spanish, which displace the use of Standard English.

The English language instruction sometimes is hindered by the fact that learners think that what they speak is English and they do not see very clear what the object of studying English is. This is greatly because of this confusion in the distinction between the two varieties.

According to our data, we consider that the Creole language as minority language will neither disappear nor will be displaced by other language because it is still spoken at home and it is still transmitted from generation to generation at least for the Raizal community; however, this language has suffered some linguistic changes, now, for example, it has more words from Spanish than before and this could eventually lead to its disappearance in the future.

The Raizal community has a loyalty toward the Creole language; in spite from the governmental authorities there is a tendency to avoid the teaching of Creole and to use it as communication tool to teach any other subject.



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## Appendix 1 Checklist for Class Observation

Profesora raizal	R RELIG 5	R INGLÉS 6	R RELIG 9	ESP 9	RELI 6	R ESPA 5	R ESP 6	R PRIMERO
INSTRUCCIÓN:	Espa-creo	Inglés	Creole	Esp	Esp	Esp-cr	Esp	Esp-cre
REDEFINICION INSTRUCCIÓN	Creole	Inglés	Creole	Espa	Esp	Esp-cre	Esp	Es-cre
DIRIGIRSE A UN ESTUDIANTE	Creo-esp	Creo-esp- inglés	Creo-esp	Es	Esp	Creo-es	Esp-cre	Cre
CODE SWITCHING	Creo-esp	Ingl-creo	Creo-esp	Esp	Esp	creo	Cre-es	Cre-esp
ACTITUD	aproba	aproba	aproba	aproba	aprob	apro	apro	apro
SUBGRUPOS	Creole	ing-creo	creo-esp	Esp	Esp	Esp-cre	Cre-es	Cre-esp
ATENCION	Creole	creo-ing	creo	Esp	Esp	Creo	Cre-es	Cre-esp
PRAISING	Creole	ingle-cre	espa	Esp	Esp	Creo	Es-cre	Creo
RUTINAS	Creole	inglés	creole	espa	esp	Creo	Cre	Cr-esp
SALUDO	creole	Creol	Creole	Esp	Esp	Esp-cre	Español	Es-cre
PREGUNTAS	Cre-espa	Ing-creo	Creo-esp	Esp	Esp	Es-cre	Es-cre	Creole
MÁS USADO	Creole	Creole	Creole Creole	Esp	Esp	Es-cre	Cre-esp	Es-cre
INTERACCION	Creole	Creole				Cre-esp		Cre-esp
DIRIGIRSE AL GRUPO	Esp-creo	creole	creole	Esp Creole	Esp creole	Spa-cre	Es-creo Cre-es	Cre-esp

## Appendix 2

Sample of questions and answers to questionnaire

Estas son las preguntas hechas a los alumnos de quinto, sexto y noveno grados de la Institución Educativa en la que hicimos el estudio.

1. Es usted raizal o continental?

24 niños raizales. =75%

8 niños continentales. =25%

2. Su padre es raizal o continental?

18 padres raizales. =56%

14 padres continentales. =43%

3. Su madre es raizal o continental?

15 madres continentales. =46%

17 madres raizales. =54%

4. Hace cuanto estudia en la institución (colegio)?

5ª grado 5.1

6b grado 7.1

9 grado 2.7

6c grado 2.6

5. En el ambiente del colegio, la lengua que más utiliza con sus amigos o compañeros cuando está en el descanso es:

a. Español

b. Inglés

c. Creole

17 niños prefieren el creole. = 53%

13 niños prefieren el español. =41%

1 niño prefiere el inglés. =3%

6. En qué idioma le gustaría que se dieran las clases?

a. Creole

b. Español

c. Inglés

20 niños prefieren el creole. =63%  
11 niños prefieren el español. R=34%  
1 niño prefiere el inglés. =3%

7. Qué ventajas o desventajas considera (usted) tiene el hablar Creole?

25 dicen que el creole tiene ventajas. =78%  
7 dicen que el creole no tiene ventajas. =22%

8. En el salón de clase, mientras resuelve algunas preguntas con los compañeros prefiere hablar con ellos en:

- a. Inglés
- b. Español
- c. Creole

12 prefieren español. =38%  
18 prefieren creole. =56%  
2 prefieren inglés. =6%

9. En qué idioma le da instrucciones su profesor(a)

- a. Creole
- b. Español
- c. Inglés

25 dicen creole.=78%  
6 dicen inglés.= 19%  
1 dice español. =3%

10. Cuando esta hablando con sus amigos asuntos que no están relacionados con la clase, qué idioma prefiere?

- a. Inglés
- b. Creole
- c. Español

15 niños español =47%  
15 niños creole. 47%  
2 niños inglés =6%

11. En qué idioma interactúa comúnmente con el profesor (a) en el aula de clase?

- a. Español
- b. Creole
- c. Inglés

24 niños creole=75%  
8 niños español= 25%

12. Cuál es el idioma que utiliza más el profesor en el aula de clase para llamarle la atención?

- a. Creole
- b. Español
- c. Inglés

2 niños creole =6%

6 español=19%

24 inglés =75%

13. Entre el inglés, el creole y el español, con cual se siente más identificado y por qué?

18 creole. = 56%

10 español.=31%

4 inglés. =13%

14. Cuando está en su casa con sus padres y hermanos o hermanas, cuál es el idioma en el que se comunican con más frecuencia?

14 niños español. =44%

18 niños creole. 56%

### Appendix 3

The Aspects being observed check list

INSTRUCCIÓN DEL PROFESOR	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
REDEFINICION DE LA INSTRUCCIÓN AL GRUPO	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
REDEFINICION DE LA INSTRUCCIÓN A UN SOLO ESTUDIANTE	INGLÉS	
	CREOLE	
	ESPAÑOL	
COMO REDEFINE LA INSTRUCCIÓN EN SUBGRUPOS	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
	INGLÉS	
CODE SWITCHING	ESPAÑOL- CREOLE	
	INGLÉS-CREOLE	
	INGLÉS- ESPAÑOL	
ACTITUD DEL PROFESOR FRENTE AL USO DE CREOLE	APROBADA	
	NO APROBA	
	ALGUNAS VECES	
CUANDO LA PROFESORA ESTA EN PEQUEÑOS GRUPOS QUE IDIOMA UTILIZA	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
QUE IDIOMA EMPLEA AL LLAMAR LA ATENCION	INGLÉS	
	CREOLE	
	ESPAÑOL	
IDIOMA EN QUE SALUDA EL PROFESOR	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
EN QUE IDIOMA HACE PRAISING	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
PARA LLAMAR LA ATENCION	INGLÉS	

DE LOS ESTUDIANTES	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
LAS RUTINAS EN QUE IDIOMA SE DAN	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
<b>ESTUDIANTES</b>		
Idioma que utiliza para saludar al profesor	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
El momento de responder preguntas utiliza	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
Mediante la interacción con sus compañeros que idioma usa	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
idioma más utilizado por los estudiantes	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	
en que idioma se dirigen al grupo	INGLÉS	
	ESPAÑOL	
	CREOLE	